

February 3, 2014

To Mayor and Members of City Council

From Scott C. Stiles, Interim City Manager *scs*

201400144

Subject **New Initiatives to Combat Homicide Rate and Long Term Strategies for Sustaining Success**

This report provides an update on the current levels of Police staffing and provides recommendations on new Police initiatives and strategies for Council approval.

Situational Analysis

With the City now having its 11th homicide and a 39.6% increase in homicides in 2013 from 2012, the Police Department is at a critical time for immediately implementing steps to address the level of crime.

Sworn staffing levels for the Police Department are at a 17-year low of 954. This is below the 2011 COP Grant's required staffing level of 971 and rapidly approaching the 2009 COP Grant's required staffing level of 946. If the Department of Justice determines that the failure to maintain the required staffing levels violates the grant and makes the City non-compliant, the City of Cincinnati could be required to repay some or all of the grant money. The 2009 grant exceeded \$13.5 million and the 2011 grant was over \$6.8 million. Military service, extended sick leave and light duty further reduce available staffing to only 905 full-duty sworn personnel of all ranks.

The last Police Recruit Class graduated from the Cincinnati Police Academy in December 2008. At graduation the authorized complement of the Police Department was 1135 sworn members. Since that time the Department has lost over 180 officers through attrition.

For Fiscal Year 2013, and again for Fiscal Year 2014, the Police Department's budget request included a 50 member recruit class. This class was targeted to begin in 2013 and maintain the complement level in compliance with the Office of Community Oriented Policing (COP) hiring grants the Department had received in 2009 and 2011. The class had to be eliminated from the appropriation for each of these budgets due to lack of available funding. The Police Department also had requested a second class to be included in the FY2015 budget, which also had to be eliminated in the budget approved by Council.

Additionally, Police Chief Blackwell recently held Town Hall Meetings in four of the five Police Districts (District Two has been postponed because of the weather) to hear from citizens and to provide district-wide policing updates. While citizens shared quality of life issues such as increased police visibility, the need for walking patrols, increased community engagement, and enhanced drug enforcement, the most prevalent concern citizens shared at these meetings was the Police Department's inability to respond to their calls for service in a timely manner. The depleted staffing

levels have severely impacted the Police Department's response time. The Department is more frequently faced with "code zeroes" (when there are no officers available to respond) resulting in extended delays and at times no response at all. Addressing these citizen concerns and improving the quality of life is Chief Blackwell's top priority.

In an effort to address these concerns, the Administration is putting forward this report to outline six immediate strategic areas to address short- and long-term neighborhood policing needs through evidence-based deployment of the Cincinnati Police Department (CPD) resources.

Strategic Solutions

CPD has attempted to mitigate staffing issues, reducing the number of sworn officers in non-patrol assignments and, where possible, returning the sworn officers to street patrol by replacing them with civilian staff. While these policies are continuing to be implemented, they are not sufficient to offset the positions that have been lost to attrition and the additional attrition facing the department in the coming months.

Police Chief Blackwell has identified almost \$1 million in operating budget savings in the Department's appropriated FY2014 budget, primarily because of delays in filling budgeted civilian positions. These funds would be used to cover the first two shorter-term approaches. With proper staffing to address these immediate concerns, the Police Department will be able to sustain these efforts by employing longer-term strategies to address crime, including a 60-member Recruit class, reconstitution of the CIRV initiative, the development of the Cincinnati Gang Unit, and implementing a youth engagement platform all of which will require additional funding.

- 1) **Police Overtime in Hotspot Areas:** Hotspot policing is intensified, intermittent patrol in specified high-crime areas, or hot street segments. This approach is not a constant, security guard-style presence, but rather approximates a crackdown-backoff approach where police are present and highly visible at an identified hotspot area for an intermittent yet consistent brief period of time; typically fifteen minutes repeated every two hours. A sizable body of experimental research on hotspot policing has documented the effectiveness of this strategy, recognizing it as a best practice in law enforcement. Approximately \$600K in FY2014 and \$600K in FY2015 will be used for Police overtime in these hotspot areas.

Analyses conducted by the CPD have recently demonstrated that an infinitely small number of individual street segments – only 23 (or less than half of one percent of street segments in the city) – accounted for **10% of all violent crime incidents, and 16% of homicides** in the previous one-year period. Strategic deployment on "hot" street segments has previously demonstrated crime suppression effects on both violent and property crime occurrences. Furthermore, a recent study in Cincinnati demonstrated that what officers specifically do during these patrol matters – with stationary visibility, and walking patrols demonstrating the greatest impact for impacting crime.

Analysis of historical crime trends suggests that as the warmer weather approaches, we can expect a significant increase in violent crime and shootings; typically within the first weeks in March. Therefore, it is critically important that we immediately increase police presence on the streets to help disrupt criminal activities. Overtime funding for this level of additional strategic

deployment is absolutely necessary given the already low staffing levels. Some of the departmental savings will be allocated to pay this identified overtime for the aforementioned work strategy. This is a critical part of the CPD's larger evidence-based strategy that targets specific problem locations as well as chronic violent offenders.

- 2) **Lateral Transfer Class:** In order to generate a sustained complement increase, the Police Department would like to initiate a 15-20 member class filled with lateral transfers of officers currently employed by other Ohio law enforcement agencies. These officers would join the CPD as police Recruits and must be OPOTA certified with two years of service with an Ohio Police Agency. Officers selected for the Lateral Transfer Class would go through the normal background process and screening and then have an abbreviated police academy training regimen of approximately eight weeks; thereby allowing for the infusion of new police officers in a much shorter time period. The Administration is working with the FOP on this recommendation.

The process has already been initiated on this endeavor and upon approval of this recommendation the Administration would expect that the officers could be on the street as early as June 2014. Any costs incurred in putting this class together in 2014 would be covered by the CPD's 2014 appropriation. The FY 2014 cost for a lateral transfer class that would begin pay period 10 (April 27) is \$347,500.

It should be noted, that without the Lateral Transfer Class, sworn strength is projected to drop to approximately 915 by the end of 2014 due to natural attrition; with further reductions based on light-duty and military service personnel.

- 3) **New 60-Members Recruit Class:** The Police Department would also like to finalize the recruiting process for another full recruit class of 60 members to begin training in July 2014. This would be a full training Academy regimen and would add to the department's street strength in the first quarter of calendar year 2015. This recruiting and testing process would also generate costs for the FY2015 budget of approximately \$5 million, and would be calculated as personnel and non-personnel costs in budgets moving forward.

It should be noted that the new Recruits as well as the Lateral Transfer Class will only replace long-term Police Officers who have or are currently leaving. The new Recruits will be paid at a lower salary than the more tenured retiring Officers thereby achieving cost savings.

In addition, the Police Department will continue their efforts to reduce non-personnel costs to achieve efficiencies and aggressively look for grant opportunities to further offset costs to the General Fund.

- 4) **Reconstitution of the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV):** The Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) is a focused deterrence strategy originally implemented in April 2007 and designed specifically to reduce violence associated with group/gangs in the city of Cincinnati. In 2013, 62% of the homicides and 63% of all shootings (fatal and nonfatal) were determined by the CPD to involve a group/gang member (labeled GMI, or gang member involved). CIRV involves the coordination of multiple partners across law enforcement, social services, and the community working collaboratively to

increase the risks associated with gun violence, provide alternatives to gun violence, and change community norms regarding the acceptance of gun violence. Prior evaluations of CIRV have empirically demonstrated a 42% reduction in GMI homicides and a 22% reduction in shootings across a 42-month evaluation period. As a result, CIRV was recognized internationally as an award-winning model, and a best practice for other law enforcement agencies.

Changes in priorities, leadership transitions, and working relationships across various CIRV partners led to a reduced emphasis on CIRV-related strategies in 2013. Simultaneously, GMI homicides increased 53% while GMI shootings increased 21% in 2013 as compared to 2012. This level of violence in our community is unacceptable. The revitalization of CIRV's evidence-based strategy will be the focal point of the CPD's response to violent crime. Full engagement in the CIRV model is labor intensive, and will require coordination across multiple partners, but it is worth the investment for improved safety in our communities and is supported unilaterally by Chief of Police Jeffrey Blackwell.

Overtime expenses for officers will be utilized to strategically identify and locate violent gang members and conduct "home visits" or in-person communications with these offenders; in coordination with other local and federal law enforcement officials. Studies have empirically demonstrated that strategically using law enforcement home visits for known gang members can lead to significant reductions in violence.

- 5) **Deploy Cincinnati Gang Unit:** Additional officers and realigning current personnel will allow the Chief to follow through on his plan to develop a fulltime Gang Unit. This unit will among other things, assist the CIRV initiative by advancing the intelligence-led policing components. The development of the gang unit is seen by Chief Blackwell as critical to the enhancement of CPD's capacity to conduct appropriate gang enforcement-related activities, including targeting, tracking, and apprehension of individuals affiliated with street gangs who engage in criminal behavior. Strategically focused gang enforcement, coupled with wide-spread communication of these enforcement efforts to other group/gang members, has demonstrated immediate and significant reductions in violence. Investment in the realignment and enhancement of the Gang Unit is a critical component for the effective implementation of the law enforcement portion of CIRV.
- 6) **Youth Engagement Platform:** The Police Department through the efforts of the Chief is currently developing a number of engagement programs and activities in an effort to revitalize primary and secondary prevention strategies working with at-risk youth. Although youth engagement programs may not have an immediate impact on the current levels of violence, they do have the capacity to stem violence long-term by reducing the likelihood of future youth involvement in gangs and violence related criminal activities. Quite simply, it is an investment in our youth and the future of our city. These programs will not be primarily funded through the general fund, but through strategic partnerships, seizure-forfeiture dollars, grant funding, and with other partnering agencies throughout Cincinnati.

Recommendations

The Administration recommends approval of this report.

Upon Council approval, the Administration will:

- 1) Use savings in the Police Department's current allocation to pay for **Police Overtime in Hotspot Areas**. Approximately \$600k in FY2014 and \$600k in FY2015 will be used for Police overtime in these hotspot areas;
- 2) Recruit a 20-member **Lateral Transfer Class** to begin June 2014;
- 3) Begin preparations for a **New 60-Member Recruit Class**, commencing in July 2014;
- 4) **Reconstitute the CIRV program** by fully allocating CPD resources and reinstituting strategic partnerships
- 5) Immediately develop and deploy the **Cincinnati Gang Unit** with a complement of two police sergeants and ten police officers to address gang and group member criminal activity; and
- 6) Implement **Youth Engagement Platform** to revitalize primary and secondary prevention strategies working with at-risk youth.

cc: Jeffrey Blackwell, Police Chief
Peggy Sandman, Interim Budget Director